

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF RAISED BILL NO. 6499: AN ACT CONCERNING
MINOR REVISIONS TO THE EDUCATION STATUTES

March 7, 2011

This testimony is submitted in favor of Bill 6499, which will reduce truancy rates by enabling truant students to obtain access to services more quickly by mandating schools to file FWSN's within 30 days of the failure of parental participation and community interventions to alleviate the absences of an identified truant student. Truant students will be able to access CSSD and other agency services much sooner than the current delayed system of filing. These services include: referral to Family Support Centers, educational advocacy, mental health services, afterschool programs, parenting classes, and other supports.

My name is Joseph Vaverchak, District Supervisor of Attendance/Residency and the McKinney Vento Homeless Liaison for the Consolidated School District of New Britain, Connecticut. I am writing this testimony in support of Bill 6499/*An Act Concerning Minor Revision to the Education Statutes*. I have worked with truant students since 1996. I have been involved in attendance/truancy committees since 1998 starting with the State of Connecticut Task Force on Truancy. Following this, I co-chaired the Governor's Prevention Program on Truancy. Our district is a member of the Consortium on School Attendance coordinated by the Office of Policy and Management. I was also part of the Families with Service Needs Advisory Board, co-chaired by Martha Stone and Preston Britner, a board that worked diligently to propose new legislation in the area of truancy which initiated the original Bill that preceded this recommendation.

I believe that diverting truant children from juvenile court is very important and diversions should be put in place. In order to enforce these diversions, school districts should be held accountable for developing and implementing policies and procedures that involve parents and the community in a process to improve attendance and divert

children from the courts. If parents are not engaged in the process I strongly believe there should be a timeline in which schools should be filing a FWSN referral. The mandate to file a FWSN in a timely manner will enable truant students access to CSSD and other agency services much sooner then the current delayed system of filing resulting in greater likelihood of school success, including lowering the drop out rate. By not mandating FWSN's be filed in a timely manner we are perpetuating the likelihood that truants will not return to school.

We know that early intervention is the key to success. Yet my experience has been that despite significant efforts on the part of districts to engage parents in the process of addressing truancy, for varying reasons, we often find ourselves without their support. Requiring FWSN's to be filed within 30 days of attempts to involve parents is vital to finding and using other avenues for intervention.

In conclusion, I am in strong support of Bill 6499 which would create a clear timeline for the filing of FWSN's and hold schools accountable for that timeline.

Respectfully submitted,

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